

FEBRUARY 8, 2011 LSPA MEETING MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 8:40am in the cafeteria. The school and part of the town lost power due to a wet snow, so the meeting began in the dark!

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER, LEGO LEAGUE – JENNY RYNNE

Jenny presented information about the Lego League. There are 3 age groups: Junior 1st Lego league for ages 6-9 years, 1st Lego league for ages 9-14, and the high school league. The purpose of the league is to get kids excited about science and technology, with an emphasis on teaching “core values,” such as teamwork and treating others with respect – in fact, exhibiting these values during competition is part of the judging criteria. The season runs September through early December with competitions throughout eastern Mass (but worldwide, too.) Teams of 10 or fewer children can be entered into competition. Jenny showed a YouTube video of a competition and encouraged parents to get involved.

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT

Kate Scanlon reported that the playground is in good shape, and most of the focus is now on keeping supplies of balls, ropes, etc. in stock. The paved basketball area has been so good to have this year with the heavy snowfall, as it can be plowed and has therefore provided play space.

A traffic study was recently completed, and 8 pages of recommendations have been released and are currently being reviewed. The recommendations encompass all the schools in the district, and there are common themes, such as the need for consistency of signs as well as earlier visibility of school zone signs on the streets. There is also a Parking study being conducted for the town that may contain recommendations like “pay ‘n park” meters in town center, which are being considered now.

Kate also updated the LSPA on some lunchtime changes. Currently, there are ~150 students at lunch at any one time, each making about 3 or 4 trips during their time in the cafeteria. The staff is experimenting with solutions that minimize the amount of “up and down” while still letting the kids relax and enjoy their friends at this time. The changes include a loose assignment of tables (the kids pick where, but once picked, they must stay put and not change tables), using “green cards” to call up tables for lunch/milk, and using a “yellow card” to indicate the table can be dismissed for the playground. While these changes seem to be helping, Kate is open to any other suggestions.

LITERARY LUNCH

Deirdre Giblin reported on that the Literary Lunch series (formerly known as “Junior Great Books”) has already begun for grades 3-5, and grades K-2 will begin after winter vacation. This will be the first year that the Kindergarten classes will participate. The series will last for 3 weeks with grades 3-5, then 3 weeks with grades K-2. The split should help with space constraints, and, by splitting the kids in half, help with managing the program.

HEALTH FAIR – LYNN VOZZELLA

Lynn reported that this year's Health Fair, which she is coordinating with Andrea Cogan, will be held on February 18th. This year, the fair will have 12 stations, and the kids will rotate through the stations from 8:30am – 11:45am. After the stations, there will be an All-School Assembly at which the Town Police drug officer will give a talk with his canine partner, Axel. Lynn thanked the 13 parent volunteers but also said she could use a few more parents – please contact Lynn if you're interested!

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The November 9, 2010 meeting minutes were reviewed and approved as is.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer's report through January 31, 2011 shows a closing balance of \$43,060.22. Revenue items are showing improvement versus last year: the Direct Appeal committee reports we have achieved 103% of last year, and box tops are doing well at 142% of last year.

Expenses are also tracking as planned. YTD, we have only spent \$3500 of the \$6300 allocated to the class teachers. Since we changed how this money is distributed from previous years (paid out only with actual expense versus automatically distributed), it appears that we may be more efficient. It is also possible that the new Mini Grants program could be substituting, but at \$1,021.73 spent ytd there, the sum of the two is still lower. Bridget Stump and Kate Carpini hope to attend a teacher's meeting soon to ensure that the teachers are aware of both the funds available and the process to ask for funds so that the proper enrichment activity occurs.

The Treasurer's Report through January 31, 2011 was approved.

5TH GRADE COMMITTEES

Donna Salvatore reported that this year's Pancake Breakfast was highly successful and earned \$1500 for the class. Thanks to everyone who helped to make it such a success. The annual ice skating event had terrific turn-out with 82 of the 88 5th grades in attendance. Donna said that the 5th grade committee plans to break even this year, expecting outlays of \$1200 for the pool party and \$2600 for Moving On expenses (including yearbooks.)

Kerry Campbell shared that 25 students attended an event at the Pine Street Inn. The kids brought baked goods and there was a speaker and a tour. Kerry also reported that they are in the planning stages for a Hoop-a-thon. Jenny Rynne is organizing the event. It will be open to all grades, and they are looking for "tall fathers" to man the basketball hoops and more parents to help count hula hoop performance (either rotations or total time.)

Donna Toelke shared that they are currently organizing an Earth day clean-up for April.

Jen Degnan reported that there will be a used book sale in conjunction with Mentor Night on April 5th. Proceeds will go to the Blackstone school.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE UPDATE – SARAH GIROTTI

Sarah reported that the School Committee will be voting on whether to extend All-Day Kindergarten (ADK) to 4 or 5 days from the current 3-day structure. ADK will remain optional to parents, but if parents do opt for the ADK program, Sarah expects that they will not have a choice as to how many extended days they can choose. Sarah also noted that ADK will continue to carry a cost commensurate with the number of days it is offered – a 3-day ADK currently costs \$1250, so a 5-day is expected to cost ~\$1600-1800 for the year.

Sarah discussed the general override that will be voted on by the town in March. The town budget shows an operating deficit of \$3 million, and the override will ask voters to absorb ~½ of that deficit; the rest will need to come from cuts to services, with ~\$750k-\$1 million of those cuts in the schools (the schools represent ~60-65% of the total town's budget). The deficit has come from rising health insurance costs and a decrease in "local receipts" (primarily property values) and the amount of state help.

To educate the town, there was discussion about what information would help. Ideas were: the absolute \$ amount and % increase in taxes, our spending cost per student versus other like communities, and what specific cuts would most likely be taken in the event the override fails. The Board of Selectmen will vote tonight on the final override number, and then specific communications can begin. There was some discussion about whether and how to promote via LSPA, the best option being a message in the Lincletter.

The meeting concluded at 10:10am.

Respectfully submitted by Cheryl Shepard.